

IS HITLER REALLY DEAD?

A Historian Examines the Evidence

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IN SEPTEMBER 1945 the circumstances of Hitler's death or disappearance had been for five months dark and mysterious. Many versions of his death or escape had become current. Some stated that he had been killed fighting in Berlin, others that he had been murdered by officers in the Tiergarten. He was supposed by some to have escaped, by air or submarine, and was alleged to be living now in a mist-shrouded island in the Baltic, now in a Rhineland rock fortress, sometimes in a Spanish monastery, or on a South American ranch, or among the friendly bandits of mountainous Albania; and the Russians, who were in the best position to illuminate

AFTER the end of the war in Europe, there was real doubt as to whether or not Hitler was still alive, especially in the absence of a *corpus delicti* and since there were so many conflicting accounts of his presumed death. The Oxford historian H. R. TREVOR-ROPER was assigned by British Army Intelligence to examine the evidence. His results were reported in his book *The Last Days of Hitler*, which became an immediate best seller upon publication in 1947, and which seemed to demonstrate rather conclusively that Hitler had committed suicide in his Berlin bunker and his body had been burned in the courtyard. Nevertheless, sensational rumors continued to flourish. The Russians announced that they had secret evidence showing Hitler to be still alive, and the Polish translation of Mr. Trevor-Roper's book was banned, the Bulgarian translation confiscated, and a Russian translation not allowed. In addition to the Russians, journalists in various other countries began to turn up with reports that Hitler was alive and hiding in the mountains of Albania or in South America. In this article, which forms the major section of the introduction to a new edition of his book just published in England by Macmillan, Mr. Trevor-Roper analyzes the "new evidence" and discusses to what extent, if any, it affects his previous findings. Mr. Trevor-Roper was born in Northumberland in 1914 and at present teaches modern history at Christ Church College, Oxford.

the facts, had they wished to do so, preferred to perpetuate the obscurity. At one time they declared Hitler dead; at another they doubted their declaration; later they announced that they had discovered the corpses of both Hitler and Eva Braun and had identified them by the teeth; later still they accused the British of concealing Eva Braun and probably Hitler in the British Zone of Germany. It was at this stage that the British Intelligence authorities in Germany, believing that such mystification was an unnecessary embarrassment, decided to collect all available evidence and to determine, if possible, the truth. I was appointed to carry out this task. I was given all necessary facilities in the British Zone; and the American authorities at Frankfurt promptly and generously offered to put all their material at my disposal, to allow me to interrogate their prisoners, and to ensure the cooperation of their local counter-intelligence organization, the CIC.

WHAT was the state of the evidence at this time? The ultimate authority on which the report of Hitler's death seemed to rest was a broadcast statement made by Admiral Doenitz to the German people on the evening of May 1, 1945. In this statement Doenitz had announced Hitler's death that afternoon, fighting at the head of his troops in Berlin. This statement had been accepted as true at the time, at least for certain practical purposes: an obituary notice of Hitler had appeared in the *London Times* next day, Mr. de Valera had expressed his condolence to the German minister in Dublin, and Hitler's name (unlike that of Martin Bormann, head of the Nazi party from 1941 on, about whose fate there had been no such statement) had been excluded from the list of war criminals to be tried at Nuremberg. On the other hand there was no more valid reason for believing Doenitz's statement than for accepting certain other assertions. Doenitz's statement

was indeed supported by a certain Dr. Karl Heinz Spaeth of Stuttgart, who deposed on oath during his holiday at Illertissen in Bavaria that he had personally attended Hitler when he was wounded in the lung by Russian shellfire at the Zoo Bunker on the afternoon of May 1, and had pronounced him dead; but another authority, a Swiss woman journalist, Carmen Mory, deposed at Hamburg with equal protestations of veracity that Hitler, to her certain knowledge, was living on an estate in Bavaria with Eva Braun, her sister Gretl, and Gretl's husband Hermann Fegelein. Carmen Mory offered to investigate this matter herself, through numerous channels at her disposal (for having been imprisoned as a spy in a German concentration camp she was well supplied with means of information); but she warned the British authorities that any attempt to dispense with her services would be fatal: at the approach of anyone in uniform, all four would infallibly commit suicide. Since both these stories could not possibly be true, it was clear that mere affidavits could not be accepted as evidence in this matter.

Anyone who undertakes an inquiry of such a kind is soon made aware of one important fact: the worthlessness of mere human testimony. It is a chastening thought to a historian to consider how much of history is written on the basis of statements no more reliable than those of Admiral Doenitz, Dr. Spaeth, and Carmen Mory. If such statements had been made and recorded with reference to the disputed death of Czar Alexander I in 1825, plenty of historians would have been ready to take them seriously. Fortunately in this case they were made by contemporaries, and it was possible to check them.

The English historian James Spedding said that every historian, when faced with a statement of fact, must ask himself the question: Who first said so, and what opportunities had he of knowing it? Subjected to this test, much of historical evidence is found to dissolve. In search of Dr. Karl Heinz Spaeth I went to the address which he had given in Stuttgart. I found that it was not a private house but the Technical High School. His name was unknown there, nor did it occur in any Stuttgart directory. It was clear that he had given a false name

and address; and since his affidavit was mendacious on this subject, there was no reason to credit it in other matters where ignorance would have been more excusable. As for Carmen Mory, her whole saga dissolved at the mere touch of criticism: she had never seen Hitler or spoken to anyone who could have known the facts. The facts she gave were demonstrably wrong, and the arguments whereby she connected them with her conclusions demonstrably illogical. Her whole statement, like that of Dr. Spaeth, was pure fantasy.

Why did these people make these false affidavits? Human motives can never be confidently interpreted, but they can sometimes be guessed. Carmen Mory, while in a German concentration camp, had become an agent of the Gestapo, selecting victims for its murders and experiments from among her fellow prisoners. This fact was well known to them, and when the camp had been captured by the Allies and its occupants liberated, it could only be a matter of time before Carmen Mory was accused of her crimes. Probably she thought that by inventing a story which she herself would be required to investigate she might both delay retribution and acquire British supporters. If so, she thought wrongly: her assistance was not required, and shortly afterwards she was condemned to death by a military tribunal, and forestalled execution by suicide.

The motives of Dr. Spaeth seem to have been less rational. The source of his story is clear. It is an amplification, with circumstantial detail and a personal part assigned to the narrator, of the broadcast statement by Doenitz. Doenitz had said that Hitler had been killed fighting at the head of his troops on the afternoon of May 1: Dr. Spaeth had accepted and embellished this minimum of apparent fact, had added local color and detail, and had introduced himself as a central figure. His motive was probably not rational but psychological: a delusion of vanity such as leads raconteurs to introduce themselves into the anecdotes they repeat, or convinced George IV that he had personally led a cavalry charge at the battle of Waterloo.

FOR mythopoeia is a far more common characteristic of the human race (and

perhaps especially of the German race) than veracity; and the evidence for this statement has increased formidably since these incidents made it obvious to me. Even in December 1947 a German airman calling himself Baumgart deposed in Warsaw that he had flown Hitler and Eva Braun to Denmark on April 28, 1945. The story is plainly fiction. One of my earliest steps in the inquiry had been to trace Hitler's two pilots, SS Obergruppenfuehrer Hans Baur and SS Standartenfuehrer Beetz, and I had established that both of them had left the Bunker with Bormann on the night of May 1. Beetz had been last seen on the Weidendammer Bridge, and his wife and friends had never heard of him since. Baur had been captured by the Russians, and his wife had shown me a message which had been conveyed from him in Poland to her in Bavaria in October 1945. Besides, we have Hitler's own signature on his will and marriage certificate "given in Berlin on April 29," the day after Baumgart claimed to have flown him to Denmark. But reason is powerless against the obstinate love of fiction, and although Baumgart afterwards retired to a lunatic asylum in Poland, those who wish to believe him will no doubt continue to do so.

Of course not all legends are pure fabrication: there are degrees of human invention, and some myths have a basis of fact or at least of wishful thinking. Such was the legend spread by Schellenberg after his surrender in Sweden, and eagerly accepted by the credulous. Schellenberg maintained that Himmler had poisoned Hitler. But how did he know? Schellenberg had not seen Hitler since 1942. His sole evidence was his own wish: he wished to believe that Himmler had accepted his advice, and by a judicious and selective misinterpretation of Himmler's remarks he had succeeded in persuading himself that he had done so. A few questions to Schellenberg, an examination of Himmler's entourage, a reference to the contemporary reports of Count Bernadotte, and Schellenberg's legend dissolved as completely as those of Spaeth and Mory.

THUS the evidence of Hitler's fate shrank on examination to the statement of Doenitz. But what opportunity had Doenitz of knowing the facts? It was known that Doenitz had left Berlin on April 21, and

had never seen Hitler since. His broadcast speech had been made from Ploen, 150 miles from the incident which it claimed to describe. How then did he know? The answer to this question was easily discovered. When the so-called "Flensburg government" was arrested, all its papers were also seized, and among these papers was a series of telegrams which had passed between Doenitz and Hitler's headquarters. The last in this series was a telegram from Goebbels to Doenitz on May 1. This telegram informed Doenitz that Hitler had died "yesterday"—i.e. on April 30—"at 1530 o'clock." Doenitz had no other evidence, for none of those who had been with Hitler at the end had been able to join him: the last eyewitnesses who had reached him from the Bunker were Ritter von Greim and Hanna Reitsch, who had left nearly two days before the end. His statement that Hitler had died fighting at the head of his troops was pure invention, and his statement that Hitler had died on May 1 was unsupported by the only evidence at his disposal, which clearly stated that he had died on April 30. Thus Doenitz too joined Spaeth and Mory and the imaginative journalists as a worthless and rejected authority. The only evidence of Hitler's death was a telegram signed by Goebbels, who could not be cross-examined because he was dead, and his body, unlike Hitler's, had been found by the Russians.

THERE was, however, at least one other possible source of evidence. On June 9, 1945, Marshal Zhukov, the Russian commanding general, had announced to the press that before his death or disappearance Hitler had married Eva Braun. This startling fact (for Eva Braun had hitherto scarcely been heard of even in Germany) was revealed, Zhukov said, by the diaries of adjutants which the Russians had found in the Bunker. These diaries, if they existed, would clearly be an important source of evidence, and I therefore decided to ask the Russians for access to them; but I decided first to collect such evidence as I could find in the areas under British and American control, and to use this to elicit from the Russians both the diaries and any other evidence that the Russians might be shown to possess. For if none of those who had offered information could survive the tests

to which they had been subjected, there must be others who had really been in a position to observe the events in Hitler's Bunker before it was captured by the Russians.

For certain facts could be established with certainty. There were in Allied custody several men who had been with Hitler until about April 22—including Doenitz, Keitel, Jodl, Speer, and several lesser figures—so that up to that time there was no mystery. But on April 22 Hitler had held the famous staff conference at which his nerve had at last given way, and after which he had ordered his staff to leave while protesting that he would stay in Berlin. It was the period from April 22 until the Russian occupation of the Chancellery on May 2 that was the dark period of which no witnesses had come forward. And yet there must have been witnesses. The question was, Who were they? The task was to find them.

Neither such a question nor such a task is really difficult. Those who remained with Hitler were simply those of his customary entourage who had been with him before April 22 and had not left on that day: generals and politicians, civil servants and adjutants, secretaries, guards, and soldiers. A list of those who customarily attended Hitler in the Chancellery was not difficult to draw up: it only remained to find those who had left on April 22, most of whom had been captured either in Flensburg or Berchtesgaden, and by cross-examining them to discover whom they had left behind them in Berlin. It was necessary to look for representatives of all classes—for guards and typists were as likely to prove good witnesses as politicians and generals. I therefore began by locating as many of the fugitives as I could find, whatever their status, in accessible Allied captivity. I was soon rewarded. Politicians and generals were represented by the Flensburg prisoners Keitel, Jodl, Doenitz, and Speer. Two of Hitler's secretaries, who had left on April 22, Fräulein Wolff and Fräulein Schroeder, were found at Berchtesgaden. Hitler's detective guard was called *Reichssicherheitsdienst Dienststelle 1*; about half of its members had been evacuated to Berchtesgaden on April 22, and captured there. I was able to interrogate them in their camps

at Ludwigsburg and Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Hitler's SS Guard, the *Fuehrerbegleitkommando*, had remained behind in Berlin, but one officer from it, SS Hauptsturmfuehrer Bornholdt, had left on a special mission on April 24 and had not returned: in due course he had become an Allied prisoner and I was able to question him about his comrades, at Neumunster in Schleswig-Holstein. Thus from every stratum of society in Hitler's Bunker representative members were found who had left on or about April 22; and these, under cross-examination, were able to designate the comrades whom they had left behind in Berlin. From their answers it was possible to construct a complete list of all those men and women, of whatever status, who had stayed behind in Berlin after the great exodus of April 22. These, if they could be found, would be the witnesses of the dark period.

How could they be found? Here again the problem is less difficult than may appear. They were all described as "missing"; but in fact people do not disappear or evaporate, even in a period of catastrophe. They either perish or remain alive: there is no third possibility. The word "missing" applies not to them but to the evidence. If they are dead, their value as witnesses is over; if they are alive, they are either prisoners or free. If they are prisoners, they can be found in prison camps—at least if they are prisoners of the Western Powers; if they are free they must be sought elsewhere, and most probably in their own home districts, where friends and local knowledge will enable them to survive, but also where enemies (and German enmities are strong) may easily betray them. In collecting the names of possible witnesses I was therefore careful to obtain all possible information about their homes, and if their names did not occur in the registers of Allied prison camps, they were sought and sometimes found in their homes. By these methods seven witnesses of the dark period, from different and independent groups, had been located and interrogated, and other relevant material had been discovered and centralized, by November 1, 1945, when the report of my conclusions was due. The seven witnesses were Hermann Karnau, a

policeman from the detective guard who was imprisoned at Nienburg and had been examined by Canadian and British authorities before he was cross-examined by me; Erich Mansfeld and Hilco Poppen, two other policemen, who were detained at Bremen and Fallingbommel; Fräulein Else Krueger, Bormann's secretary, who was detained at Ploen in Schleswig-Holstein and interrogated by me; Erich Kempka, Hitler's transport officer, who had been captured at Berchtesgaden and was interrogated both by American officers and by myself at Moosburg; Hanna Reitsch, the test pilot, who was detained in Austria and was interrogated by American officers; and the Baroness von Varo, a casual visitor in Hitler's Bunker, who had been discovered by a British journalist in Berlin, and who was traced and interrogated by me in her mother's home at Bueckeburg. Other relevant material included the diary of General Koller, since published (Karl Koller, *Der letzte Monat*, Mannheim, 1949), the diary of Count Schwerin von Krosigk, captured with its author at Flensburg, and the papers of Admiral Doenitz and his "government." Based on evidence from these sources my report was submitted by the Intelligence Division in Berlin to the British government and to the Quadripartite Intelligence Committee in Berlin. At the end of the report I suggested certain other sources of evidence which might still become available: in particular I mentioned that Hitler's pilot Hans Baur and the head of the *Reichssicherheitsdienst* Brigadefuehrer Rattenhuber, who had ordered the burial of Hitler's body, were reported captured by the Russians in an official Russian communiqué, and that certain other important witnesses might have been taken at the same time; and I asked for access to the captured adjutants' diaries which had been cited by Marshal Zhukov as his authority for the marriage of Hitler and Eva Braun. The Russians noted these requests but never answered them.

At the same time an abbreviated version of the report was issued to the press.

THE evidence for Hitler's last days increased considerably between the issue of the report of November 1, 1945, and the writing of my book in the summer of 1946, but since it did not alter the conclusions

except in two trifling details,* I shall pause at this stage to answer certain questions or criticisms which were made at the time of its presentation.

For the report of November 1, 1945, it must be admitted, was not equally popular in all quarters, and that not entirely because of any defects of logic or lucidity which may have disfigured it. Throughout the summer and autumn of 1945 many resourceful journalists had been pursuing phantoms of Hitler with energy and enthusiasm, and the pleasant lakes of the Swiss frontier and the romantic Tyrolean Alps and the comfortable resorts of Upper Austria were frequently visited by devoted investigators whose scrupulous consciences forbade them to ignore even the most inconsiderable clue. In the course of these researches many engaging theories were propounded; but as winter drew near, and personal excursions became less attractive, the consensus of opinion began to allow that Hitler had really remained in Berlin, and the mystery of his fate was one that could best be solved not by strenuous travel in an inclement season, but by ingenious meditation in well-heated saloon bars. Consequently my report, which stated that Hitler had died in Berlin on April 30, as Goebbels had said, and that all other explanations of his disappearance were "contrary to the only positive evidence and supported by no evidence at all," was found unacceptable by many. The critics did not indeed deny the evidence that was produced, but they maintained that there was still a possibility of escaping so final a conclusion; they maintained that the body that had been burnt was that not of Hitler but of a "double" introduced at the last minute, and they echoed the sentiment if not the words of Professor Hanky on a similar occasion: "No matter though nine-tenths of the marks and measurements corresponded, so long as there is a tenth that does not do so,

* In the report of November 1, 1945, I ascribed the wedding, in the absence of definite evidence, to the *evening* of April 29. Subsequent evidence showed that it really took place in the small hours of the *morning* of April 29. In the report I also accepted Gebhardt's statement that he visited the Bunker "about April 23-4." Subsequent evidence convinced me that this could not be true, and I afterwards established, by cross-examining Gebhardt, that his visit had been on April 22 as stated in my book.

we should not be flesh and blood if we did not ignore the nine points and insist only on the tenth." Alternatively they maintained that the witnesses on whose evidence the report was based had all been carefully briefed; that their evidence was a deliberately pre-concerted cover-story and should be rejected altogether; and that in the total absence of evidence thus happily restored there was room for the unlimited development of any theory that might seem attractive to its inventor.

SUCH a suggestion can, in my opinion, be easily disproved. It is only necessary to consider its logical consequences. If half a dozen or a dozen people are all told to tell the same story under interrogation, then it may be assumed (supposing that their memories are infallible and their loyalty firm) that they will do so, even if the circumstances of the rehearsal (amid shellfire and battle) were somewhat distracting and the circumstances of the interrogation (isolated from each other, and six months later) somewhat difficult. But even in these ideal conditions the witnesses, who will begin by agreeing in every detail, so long as they are questioned within the brief that they have prepared, will inevitably disagree when the interrogator presses them on unconcerted matters, and their answers must be drawn not from a common prepared text but from their separate imaginations. On the other hand if the witnesses are speaking the truth, as far as they can, about an experience which they have really shared, the development of their answers will be in precisely the opposite direction. At first their replies will differ, because their opportunities of observation and recollection have been different; but as interrogation detaches those differences of circumstance, the essential agreement will become clear. Any interrogator soon becomes familiar with these facts, and by appreciating them, can often detect whether a story has been concerted or not; and on the strength of those facts I consider that the various witnesses whom I have interrogated, directly or indirectly, on the subject of Hitler's death were undoubtedly telling not a pre-concerted story, but their own attempts to recollect the truth.

One small instance may be given to illustrate this point. The guard Karnau per-

sistently affirmed that he saw the corpses of Hitler and Eva Braun burst suddenly, as if by spontaneous combustion, into flame. The chauffeur Kempka maintained that Guensche had set them alight. These two versions seem incompatible, but cross-examination reveals that they are simply two aspects of the same fact. Guensche lit the bodies by throwing a burning rag upon them; but he threw it from beneath the porch of the Bunker, and was therefore invisible to Karnau who was standing by the tower. The truth of the incident is attested by the rational discrepancy of the evidence. Had Karnau and Kempka been taught their parts, they would never have disagreed at the start.

THE report of November 1 had solicited certain information from the Russians. This information was never produced, but from other sources evidence continued to come in to enrich although not to alter the main conclusions. For by November 1 the inquiry had only lasted six weeks, and it was impossible for all available witnesses to be identified, traced, found, and interrogated in so short a time. Among the most important additional witnesses who were arrested and interrogated after November 1 was Artur Axmann, who had succeeded Baldur von Schirach as head of the Hitler Youth and who was arrested in the Bavarian Alps in December 1945 after a long and complicated Anglo-American intelligence operation. But the most significant and dramatic addition to knowledge was supplied by the discovery, in the winter of 1945-6, of a set of documents which strikingly confirmed the conclusions of the report of November 1: Hitler's private and political testaments and the certificate of his marriage with Eva Braun.

At the end of November 1945, when I returned to Oxford on leave, I received a signal from British Headquarters at Bad Oeynhausen that a document had been discovered which purported to be Hitler's will, but that its authenticity was uncertain. Now I already had some information about Hitler's will, for in the same telegram in which Goebbels had reported the death of Hitler to Doenitz he had mentioned the Fuehrer's Testament of April 29 which had made certain political appointments, and which

was being sent to Doenitz. Doenitz had furthermore stated that he had sent a plane to meet the bearer, but that the pilot, having been in touch with the bearer at the Havel, had lost him and returned empty. Since the document which had now been discovered was dated April 29, and contained several political appointments, including those mentioned in Goebbels' telegram, there were good grounds for supposing it genuine. But Goebbels' telegram, which seemed to establish the authenticity of this document, also seemed to show that there were no less than three such documents, addressed separately to Doenitz, Field Marshal Schoerner (then commanding an Army Group in Bohemia), and the Party Archives in Munich. It was therefore clearly important to investigate the circumstances of this discovery.

IN THE summer of 1945 a Luxemburg journalist, Georges Thiers, had approached the British Military Government in Hanover. He had wished for employment, and had explained that he was usefully informed on many topics and could provide information on such interesting subjects as life in Hitler's Bunker in Berlin; but as he could give no valid explanation to account for his alleged intimacy with these high matters, his application had been ignored. Later, however, he had fallen under the suspicion of using false papers: he had been arrested and had admitted that in fact he was not a Luxemburger but a German, and that his name was not Georges Thiers, but Heinz Lorenz. He had been interned, and in November 1945, in the course of a routine search, a set of papers had been found sewn in the lining of his clothes. These appeared to be Hitler's personal and political testaments and a document signed by Dr. Goebbels and entitled "Appendix to the Fuehrer's Political Testament." Under interrogation Lorenz admitted that he had been in Hitler's Bunker at the end and had been ordered to deliver these documents to Munich. He confirmed Goebbels' statement that there had been, in all, three sets of documents; and he explained that he had been accompanied in his escape from Berlin by two other men: Major Willi Johannmeier, who was to carry Hitler's political testament to Field Marshal Schoerner, and SS Standartenfuehrer Wilhelm Zander,

who was to convey to Admiral Doenitz Hitler's two testaments and the certificate of his marriage to Eva Braun. To complete the evidence and establish the authenticity of the documents beyond a doubt it was therefore necessary to find Johannmeier and Zander.

Johannmeier was easily found, living with his parents in Iserlohn. A straightforward soldier, of unconditional loyalties and unpolitical courage, at first he denied all knowledge of the Bunker, then, finding it impossible to maintain this position, he insisted that he had merely been sent as a military escort to Zander and Lorenz, to guide them through the Russian lines. What their mission was he did not know: it had been none of his business to ask. Nothing could shake him from this position, and in spite of the discrepancy between his evidence and that of Lorenz, he almost convinced his interrogators. At any rate it was clear that no progress could be made till further evidence had been obtained from Zander.

Zander's home was in Munich, but all the evidence proved that he had not visited it since the defeat of Germany. His wife was found living with her parents in Hanover, and confirmed that she had never seen her husband since the end of the war. She explained that she still hoped for news, and willingly provided photographs of Zander and addresses of his mother and brothers in the hope that she might obtain information about him; but no clue led anywhere, until it was realized that all this was part of an elaborate stratagem designed to mislead the pursuers. Visiting Munich in December 1945 I soon obtained casual information which convinced me that Zander was alive, but in hiding, and that Frau Zander, in her zeal to conceal his existence, had even persuaded his own mother and brothers that he was dead. After a minute examination of local evidence it was established that Zander was living under the false name of Friedrich-Wilhelm Paustin, and had worked for a time as a market gardener in the Bavarian village of Tegernsee.

FROM that moment the arrest of Zander was only a matter of time. The local records of Tegernsee soon revealed his movements, and after an abortive raid on his

address in the village, he was tracked down to the little village of Aidenbach near Passau on the Austrian frontier. Thither I went, accompanied by members of the American CIC, and there, at 3 AM on December 28, he was found and arrested. He was staying with Bormann's secretary. Under interrogation he revealed himself as a disillusioned Nazi idealist who saw that his former world was shattered and spoke freely. His story agreed with that of Lorenz: he had brought his documents to Hanover and thence, seeing that delivery to Doenitz was impossible, had walked to Munich and concealed them in a trunk. The trunk was now deposited with a friend in Tegernsee; but another visit to Tegernsee proved unnecessary. Alarmed by the previous raid, the custodian of the trunk had voluntarily surrendered it to the local CIC while I was in Aidenbach looking for Zander. The documents were found in it: they consisted, as Lorenz had stated, of Hitler's two testaments and the marriage certificate.

After the arrest of Zander, interest returned to North Germany, to the irreducible Johannmeier, whose story of ignorance was now assailed by the independent but unanimous testimony of his two companions. Nevertheless he held firmly to his version. He had no documents, he said, and therefore could produce none. It was clear that he was actuated merely by loyalty. He had been ordered on no account to allow the documents to fall into Allied hands, and these orders he intended to fulfill, in spite of the evidence. Impervious to fear, indifferent to reward, it seemed that nothing would move him except reason. I appealed to reason. He could give us nothing that we had not got; we could not accept his story against the agreement of all other evidence; we had no interest in holding him and yet must do so unless he could explain away this obvious difficulty. For two hours Johannmeier firmly resisted even this appeal; even proof seemed uncertain against his single-minded insistence. Ultimately it was a pause in the proceedings which achieved his conversion. In interrogation pressure must be uninterrupted, but persuasion needs pauses, for only during a pause can a man reason with himself and catch up with the argument. In this pause, Johannmeier reasoned with himself and convinced himself.

He decided (as he explained afterwards during the long drive to Iserlohn) that if his companions, old and highly promoted party men, could so easily betray a trust which, to them, was connected with their alleged political ideals, then it was quixotic in him, who had no such party connections (for he was simply a regular soldier), to suffer longer in their cause or defend the pass which they had already sold. So after the pause, when the seemingly endless business began again, he observed at last, "*Ich habe die Papiere.*" There was no need of further words. He accompanied me by car to Iserlohn, and there led me into the back garden of his home. It was dark. With an ax he broke open the frozen ground and dug up a buried bottle. Then, breaking the bottle with the ax, he drew out and handed to me the last missing document: the third copy of Hitler's political testament, and the vivid covering letter in which General Burgdorf told Field Marshal Schoerner that it was "the shattering news of Himmler's treachery" which had driven Hitler to his last decision.

AFTER the discovery of all these papers the evidence of Hitler's last days was substantially complete, but the inquiries which had once been begun continued to yield fruit. In January, a fortnight after the capitulation of Johannmeier, Lieutenant Colonel von Below was found, studying law in the University of Bonn. He had been the last to leave the Bunker before Hitler's death, and had been the bearer of his last valedictory recriminations to the General Staff. Then, in the spring and summer of 1946, Hitler's two secretaries, Frau Christian and Frau Junge, were at last found and interrogated: Frau Christian had been dodging arrest since the autumn of 1945, when I had missed her by a few days at her mother-in-law's house in the Palatinate. These and other captures, and the interrogation of a number of subsidiary characters, added detail and color to the story, and resolved small remaining doubts, but the main lines of the story were clear and unchanged.

This does not mean that the story is complete, even now. At least two points remain, in spite of all the evidence, obscure: the ultimate disposal of Hitler's body, and the fate of Martin Bormann.

THE bodies of Hitler and Eva Braun, it is clearly established, were burnt in the Chancellery garden on the afternoon and evening of April 30, 1945: but what was done with the charred remainders? It is impossible completely to destroy bodies in an open fire, and it is clear that they were in fact ultimately disposed of in some other way; but that disposal was a secret disposal. The men who carried it out were sworn to secrecy, and when Linge told his questioners that the bodies were burnt "till nothing remained" he was plainly rebuking their curiosity by an evasion rather than seeking to satisfy it with an answer. If we wish to pursue this perhaps unrewarding topic, we must ask the question, Who was in a position to know the facts? The answer is that (of named persons) Bormann, Goebbels, Guensche, and Rattenhuber must certainly have known. Goebbels is dead, and Bormann missing, but Guensche and Rattenhuber were captured by the Russians, and the capture of Rattenhuber, together with the pilot Baur, was admitted in the official Russian communiqué of May 6, 1945. It is not certain that these prisoners are still alive, for although Baur was certainly alive in October 1945, Guensche and Rattenhuber may have committed suicide or died after capture; but if they were alive they could have answered the question. Unfortunately the Russians, whose accusations precipitated my inquiry, would never answer any of the questions which were addressed to them, and we must conclude either that they never really wished to ascertain the facts, but merely used ignorance as a means of accusation, or that the organization of their intelligence is not equal to the strain of ascertaining the facts at its disposal. When I recall that the Russians left Hitler's diary in his chair for five months, I find myself as ready to entertain the latter hypothesis as the former.

Excluding then all Russian evidence as unobtainable, can we point to any evidence outside their control which might give an answer to our question? In this matter I have been unfortunate. One other man who very probably knew about the disposal of the bodies was an officer of the SS escort, Hauptsturmfuehrer Helmuth Beermann, who was on duty at the time. Beermann was reported captured by the American 9th

Army; but by the time that I began my inquiry the 9th Army had been dissolved, and its prisoners redistributed among the remaining armies. In the course of redistribution all trace of Hauptsturmfuehrer Beermann had been lost. Possibly he had died, or escaped unnoticed: but at all events his name was not known in any American prison camp in September 1945.

There remains one other man who possibly knows more than he has admitted. When Artur Axmann was arrested in December 1945 he was interrogated on a brief supplied by me, and in answer to a question replied that he had no knowledge of the ultimate disposal of the bodies of Hitler and Eva Braun. At the time he was not pressed, and in general his answers were found to be correct wherever it was possible to confirm them; but eight months later, when Frau Junge was arrested and asked the same question, she replied: "I know from Guensche that the ashes were collected into a box which was given to Reich Youth Leader Axmann." Unfortunately it has not proved possible to re-examine Axmann.

THERE then the matter must rest. Nevertheless, if I were to hazard a guess, I should guess that the ashes were given to Axmann. When Hitler decided to stay and die in Berlin, he did so under the influence of Goebbels, who consciously directed the last act as an appeal to posterity by the founding of a myth. It would have been consistent with such a plan to pass on the sacred relics not to the present generation, whose unworthiness had betrayed Hitler's great designs, but to the next. And the next generation was represented by the Hitler Youth. As the experiment of Nazism drew to its close, Hitler turned more and more to the Hitler Youth. He received their representatives at his last birthday parade; they manned the last bridgeheads in Berlin; their leader remained with him to the end; and in his political testament he specially mentions "the contribution, unique in history" of the Hitler Youth. Hitler's remains may not have been given to Axmann; but it would have been logical and consistent if they had been. Even so, we do not know where he would have put them.

The fate of Bormann is also uncertain. Here again the vital witness is Axmann, who

alleges that he saw his dead body in the street. One witness is never conclusive, but his evidence may nevertheless be true. The negative evidence certainly suggests that if Bormann is alive he is not in Western Germany; but both he and Hitler's ashes could be in Russia, and we would know no more about it than we know about the fate of Guensche and Rattenhuber.

Perhaps this is the point at which to mention another character who is mentioned in my book and whose fate is still unknown. Heinrich Mueller is mentioned by several witnesses who saw him in the Bunker, generally in connection with the trial of Fegelein. Now Mueller, head of the Gestapo, is a man seldom named among the Nazi leaders. A Bavarian, a professional policeman, all his life he never deviated from his chosen functions nor raised his mind towards the larger horizon of Nazi politics. But in a police state the secret police can be a vast empire, and Mueller, by his silent, unremitting orthodoxy, his absolute ruthlessness, his incorruptibility, his apparent omniscience, became in the end one of the most powerful figures in the dark corridors of the Third Reich. A devoted disciple of Heydrich, he had admired the philosophy and succeeded to the methods of his protector; and these two men—not Kaltenbrunner or Schellenberg—must probably be regarded as the real brains behind the strange, incalculable, cloudy figure of Himmler: they built and maintained the engine of terror which operated in his name. Heinrich Mueller disappeared like Bormann in the last days of Nazi Berlin; and among the missing German criminals he is second only to Bormann.

FINALLY there is one other unresolved problem—the adjutants' diaries to which Zhukov ascribed his knowledge of Hitler's marriage with Eva Braun. As with all Russian evidence, nothing can be proved and we are forced to guess. On this subject it is my guess that the diaries never existed. The inhabitants of the Bunker who might have been described as adjutants were General Burgdorf, Colonel von Below, Major Freytag von Loringhoven, Rittmeister Boldt, Lieutenant Colonel Weiss, and Major Johannmeier. All these except Burgdorf left the Bunker in good order before Hitler's

death and had opportunities to remove or destroy any private papers. Boldt assures me categorically that neither he nor Weiss nor Freytag von Loringhoven kept a diary. After Hitler's death, Burgdorf stayed behind in the Bunker when the others sought to escape, alleging that he was going to commit suicide. He had plenty of time in which to destroy his papers if he so wished. And anyway, since the Russians failed to find Hitler's diary—a stout bound volume 14 inches by 8—why should we believe them capable of finding Burgdorf's, if it ever existed?

And yet the facts which Zhukov had divulged as from those diaries were both new and true: the interrogation of eyewitnesses and the discovery of the marriage certificate itself confirm them. Whence did Zhukov know these facts?

There is an obvious answer. Readers of my book know that late on the night of April 30, General Hans Krebs paid a personal visit to Marshal Zhukov and spent some twelve hours at his headquarters offering to the Russians, on behalf of Goebbels and Bormann, a conditional and provisional surrender. Now General Krebs was not merely Chief of the German General Staff. For many years he had been military attaché in Moscow. He spoke Russian fluently, knew the leading men in the Red Army personally, and had always been accounted a warm advocate of Russo-German cooperation, as a living symbol of which he had once, on a famous occasion, been publicly embraced by Stalin. Thus the emissary who arrived at Russian headquarters at the midnight following Hitler's death was no stranger: he was well entertained by Zhukov, and the opportunities of conversation between friends so long separated and so strangely reunited cannot have been neglected. Krebs had to explain and justify his commission. The letter which he brought was signed by Goebbels and Bormann, as ministers appointed by Hitler before his death. Naturally Zhukov would question Krebs about the circumstances of Hitler's death; and naturally, as conversation developed about that strange last episode, Krebs would describe also the wedding which had preceded it. Zhukov had no need of "captured adjutants' diaries"; but since the Russians, for some reason, never wished to publish or admit this last-minute meeting,

Zhukov evidently preferred to ascribe to that imaginary but impersonal source the knowledge which he had clearly obtained from his real and personal visitor.

If the diaries thus vanish from among the still unexploited sources of evidence, what has become of the real source, General Krebs? In the first edition of my book I reported his words that he would stay in the Bunker and commit suicide after the others had left in their attempt to escape from Berlin. Certainly he stayed behind in the Bunker with Burgdorf and Schedle; but whether he committed suicide or not it is impossible for us to say. He may well have done so; and yet I cannot forget Speer's description of him as "a smooth, *surviving* type"; we do not know what private plans or promises he may have concerted with Zhukov at that unreported meeting; possibly a Chief of the German General Staff, a successor of Moltke and Schlieffen, Ludendorff, Beck, and Halder, though the last and least and briefest tenant of their great office, may have seemed worth something to the Russians; and we do not know whether the sudden action of the Czech government, seven months later, in demanding the trial of Krebs as a war criminal, was the result of information or merely of ignorance. My own questions on that subject were never answered.

WHILE dealing with evidence from Russian sources, there is one further question to be asked. Why did the Russian authorities in Berlin, after publicly accepting, in May 1945, the theory of Hitler's death, suddenly, in June 1945, repudiate their public acceptance of it before plunging into that total and permanent silence on the subject which they have since maintained? No ready answer can be given to this question, for the Russians never submitted any evidence for their Allies to examine, and their own methods and motives in the use of evidence inspire no confidence. One point may, however, be made. It is certain that Marshal Zhukov had opportunities of knowing, though not necessarily of testing, the facts as related by Krebs. The various, often contradictory, statements which issued in disconnected series from his headquarters in the first month after Hitler's death confirm this obvious truth. But it is

equally clear that whatever views about Hitler's death may have been entertained, and perhaps even based on evidence, by Russian authorities in Berlin, Stalin in Moscow was expressing a definite view that Hitler was alive. On May 26, 1945, while Russian Headquarters in Berlin were still supporting the theory of Hitler's death as available from Krebs, or from the prisoners Rattenhuber and Baur, Stalin, in the Kremlin, said to Harry L. Hopkins that he believed "that Bormann, Goebbels, Hitler, and probably Krebs had escaped and were in hiding." This statement can hardly have been based on evidence from Berlin, where the body of Goebbels had long since been found and certainly identified; it must therefore represent a personal prejudice of Stalin, who either believed it because he wished to believe it, or stated it because he wished it to be believed. Again, on June 6, when Zhukov was assuring war correspondents in Berlin that Hitler's death was certain, Stalin, in Moscow, repeated to Hopkins "that he was sure that Hitler was alive."

Three days later Zhukov first publicly recanted his view. At this time Allied observers noticed that Zhukov was completely controlled by his political adviser, Vishinsky, and seemed unwilling to answer any questions without reference to him. It seems a reasonable inference that between June 6 and June 9 Zhukov had been corrected by Moscow and ordered to abandon his own view, based on evidence, that Hitler was dead, and to substitute for it Stalin's view, derived from some other motive, that he was alive. What that motive was it is impossible to say; but certainly Stalin persevered in his view, which had now become the official doctrine. On July 17, at Potsdam, he surprised Mr. James F. Byrnes, the American Secretary of State, by saying that he believed Hitler to be alive, probably in Spain or Argentina. Ten days later he stated that his opinion was unchanged. By September, when I began my inquiries, it was quite clear that the Russians had accepted this view as the official doctrine. Whether it was true or not was by now totally irrelevant: they were no longer even interested in evidence; and silence, as so often, became the chief protection of a doctrine which it was increasingly difficult to maintain but impolitic openly to deny.